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Children in the entertainment and advertising industries

Gary Partington

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Children in the Entertainment and Advertising Industries

by

Dr. Gary Partington

under the auspices of

The International Institute for Policy and Administrative Studies

for the

Department for Community Services

Western Australian College of Advanced Education

December 1989
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This survey of the employment of children in the entertainment and advertising industries has described the nature and process of employment of children in the following areas:

a) film dramas and documentaries  
b) television commercials  
c) radio commercials and dramas  
d) print advertising  
e) live theatre  
f) modelling.

The survey was limited in its scope, and any conclusions based on it must be regarded as tentative until a more thorough investigation based on a larger, more representative sample is conducted. Even so, some companies appear to maintain high standards of conduct in relation to the employment of children, judging from the accounts they present. Others report less consistent care, and this is supported in some cases by reports from parents and others in the industry. Unfortunately, for those who appear to be exercising a high level of care, it was not always possible to obtain the views of parents and others, and consequently the conclusion reached, that they are performing very well, is uncorroborated. Further, more extensive research is necessary to confirm the findings of this survey.

The numbers of children working in the industry are relatively small even though one agent has over 300 children listed. The amount of work also is small, and certainly in most instances quite short term. It is rare for more than a limited number of children to obtain work in a film drama which takes many weeks to produce. Most jobs which involve children are in advertising, and these require sessions of no more than four hours in most cases, or a day or two in some extended situations. In some areas, such as photography and radio commercials, calls of an hour are normal. Brief periods such as these result in fewer problems in the employment of children. Even so, the conditions of employment for some children who are used for half-day and full-day calls can be questioned, as the provision of breaks and the duration of shoots are not satisfactory.
Given the limited nature of the survey, there were nevertheless strong objections to the treatment of children in the film drama industry. While some of the respondents to the survey were sought out because they were known to have strong views, others who were interviewed at random also expressed concern, both within the industry as a whole and among parents. Long hours, inadequate breaks and insufficient attention to quality educational care were observations made by a number of interviewees, particularly in relation to film dramas. Regulation seems to be the only solution to resolve this situation.

The criteria and processes for selecting children have been outlined, and the numbers and ages of children used by the samples generally estimated. In most cases employers have worked through casting agents to obtain the children, although some employers made direct approaches to children, especially when budgets were small or there were special reasons for not using an agent. In general, it would seem children's interests are better protected when they work through an agent, as their conditions of service are clearly defined.

Contracts were regularly used for television and live performance, but were not commonly used in other areas because of the short term nature of the employment. Contracts for work in television have become necessary because payment is based on a variety of factors, including the exposure of the advertisement. In contrast, most other areas were based on an hourly rate. There appears to be no intent to exploit performers because of this: it may simply be historical accident that television performance has developed this way. While it is not suggested that all areas of the industry should use contracts (this could be quite detrimental to the industry), some form of consistency in their use may be desirable.

Supervision was considered to be satisfactory in film dramas, live performance, radio and modelling. It was less satisfactory in television commercial production. Reliance on parents to supervise children seems to be unrealistic, and the definite appointment of responsibility is necessary. At present, there is no indication of what makes a person suitable to supervise. This may need attention. The appointment of a specific individual to assume responsibility is desirable.

Allied with supervision is the need to ensure adequate facilities for children for rest and for education particularly in film dramas. Minimum standards of accommodation exist elsewhere in the community and the respondents to this survey indicated that
The industry made it quite clear that flexibility is essential for effective functioning. Changes on short notice appear to be a characteristic of many aspects of both advertising and entertainment productions, and if regulations restrict this flexibility the use of children may diminish. Even so, comparative studies of the kinds of regulations governing employment of children elsewhere should be made to see to what extent this flexibility is a result of inadequate planning rather than genuine need.

It must be emphasised that most people in the industry expressed the view that they are attempting to care effectively for the children whom they employ. They have a strong argument in that children who are unhappy will not perform effectively. Given this, and the fact that many mentioned they followed Actors Equity guidelines in employing children, it may simply need the added weight of government regulations to ensure a measure of conformity in what they do when employing children.

It would be most unfortunate, however, if the guidelines were so restrictive that they inhibited the employment of children altogether. This is particularly significant in view of the generally expressed opinion that there is no anticipation of expansion in the industry. In fact, a number of interviewees considered that decline is more likely, giving strong reasons for this. There is obviously a need for regulation, but it must be ensured that reasonable care does not become excessive constraint.
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INTRODUCTION

The intention of this report is to describe the processes by which children become actors in the entertainment and advertising industries, and the conditions under which they work. The stated purpose of this report is to provide an account of the practices in each part of the industry to allow for moderation of the conditions for employment of children when the forthcoming Act is proclaimed.

The survey was limited in its scope, and has been based on a sample of companies which operate in the industry. Some of these were chosen at random, some were recommended for inclusion by various bodies, and some were such key players in the field that their inclusion was considered essential.

All information was obtained by interview. Interviews were based on a set of questions, but, given the exploratory nature of the survey it was considered undesirable to adhere strictly to the questions framed. Broader responses were sought in order to obtain as wide a view of the industry as possible. Transcripts of interviews were forwarded to interviewees who were asked to check their scripts for accuracy and report and inaccuracies to the researcher. A number of respondents did this.

Interviews were conducted between September and December 1989, and were conducted both personally and by telephone. While it was hoped that confidentiality of informants could be maintained, the smallness of the industry in Western Australia makes it quite possible for readers to guess the names of the informants. While this may occur, there is no intention to label any company or individual in any way. All information was accepted in good faith, and has been reported here. Similar information was sought from a variety of groups, and as a result there is some conflict in what has been reported. These contradictions have been presented in the report. In some cases very different interpretations have been placed on the conditions under which children work in the industry. Where this occurs it suggests there is a need for clarification and perhaps legislation.

Of necessity, the survey has been very small in scope, and there was certainly little opportunity to conduct an exhaustive study of processes and conditions. Because the coverage is not comprehensive, and in some cases was limited to one or two sources, practices may have been reported which do not reflect those of the bulk of the industry. If this is the case it is hoped that a future survey, more comprehensive in nature, will be
conducted to clarify the situation. In the meantime, if any aberration have been reported as the norm for the industry, it is hoped that more representative information will be provided to the Department for Community Services to clarify the situation.

When the reviewer embarked on this survey, he had little knowledge of the industry, and had no preconceptions or biases regarding different practices. He has relied upon commentators and participants in all sections of the media industry to inform him of the processes and conditions which have operated. Viewpoints from various parts of the industry are reported in as objective a manner as possible. The author has retained any judgements, in the form of observations, for listing at the end of each section.

Nature of the Industry

The divisions in the industry are not clearcut and often there is considerable overlap, but generally three major parts can be distinguished. These are entertainment, advertising and education. The entertainment sector includes film dramas and documentaries, radio dramas and theatre, including drama, opera, dance and music. Not all of these were covered: dance and music were excluded from this initial survey. Advertising consists of TV and radio commercials, fashion parades and print advertising. An attempt was made to obtain information on all of these, but little information was obtained on radio commercials.

Education includes media productions for the purpose of educating the audience. In many instances the conditions for producing these is similar to the production of film dramas and documentaries. For this purpose, no attempt has been made to exclude this area from the survey, particularly in those respects that resemble the film drama and documentary field. What has been excluded, and perhaps it should not have been, has been school based productions such as television programmes based on particular schools or classes, and live productions such as school plays and musical events. Some examination of these may be desirable to see to what extent conditions and processes in educational institutions parallel conditions in the commercial world. They may provide a benchmark for acceptable standards of conduct for the commercial world.

The commercial world appears has a number of characteristics which are useful in understanding the processes at work in the employment of children. First, much of the industry is ephemeral. Production teams come together for a short time to produce a
product and then disperse, only to come together in some different configuration for another product. Even those organisations which organise the production appear to be of short duration, and advertising agency mergers are common. Second, the industry appears to be marked by short time frames and tight budgets, so that rapid work is essential. Time wasted is money lost, and perhaps reputations and contracts brought into question.

The industries represent the interface of the creative and commercial worlds. To optimise the commercial benefits, the creative talent of actors must be maximised within the limits of the budget. This places considerable tensions on the task of producing a film or commercial, and in part may explain some of the problems reported by some of the people interviewed in the survey.

It can be expected that most people in the industry attempt to care effectively for the children they work with. As many people reported, you can't work with talent that is unhappy or tired. Consequently it is in their best interests to provide for the children in every possible way. Whether this occurs in practice depends upon the individuals concerned, and the pressures on them.
Live Performance

Introduction

Two areas were covered in this part of the industry: professional theatre and opera. In both cases the use of children has been very minor. As one interviewee stated, "People don't put children in plays". Even so, each year children are employed in operas, and an overview of this aspect of the industry is desirable to observe the processes used in the employment of those children. In the case of the theatre, the last time a child had appeared in a play produced by the company interviewed was four years ago. Naturally, other theatres may have employed children to perform in their plays since then, so it was pertinent to seek information on the theatre's approach to the use of children in the hope that this would give guidance to the needs of the area.

Selection of Children

There are three approaches to the recruitment of children: approaches to schools which specialise in the kind of work that meets the needs of the industry; using children of parents who perform in the company; and public auditions. The numbers of children required and the nature of the performance demands influence the recruiting methods. If large numbers of children are needed, such as for a musical, then open auditions, through newspaper advertisements, are called. If choral work is required, as in opera or music theatre, students at specific schools are called upon to participate. If few children are needed, cast members will be asked if their children can participate. This appeared to be a preferred method: as one interviewee commented,

We try to use children of chorus members so they are with them in dressing rooms and on stage to give directions. They are like 'theatre families'.

For stage performances, one company seeks the approval of the Department for Community Services and the Ministry of Education before employing lower secondary and upper primary children.

Ages

The ages of children selected depended upon the script. If a four year old child was called for, then such a child was selected. Even so, within this there was some flexibility. Directors preferred to
capabilities and so in one case a 15 year old played the part of a 12 year old. Two musicals were performed by one company, in which children aged 8 to 14 performed.

**Numbers**

As stated above, very few children have been employed. In the case of the drama theatre, only once child had been used in four years. With opera, however, eight children aged 8 to 14 were performing in the production taking place at the time of the interview, and four had been used in a previous production. Overall, there appears to be little demand for children in professional live performances.

**Contracts**

Actors Equity contracts are used as a matter of course. One interviewee made it quite clear that all Equity regulations and scales of pay were followed. For example, the contracts covered salary, hours of work, rehearsals, performances, and specific characteristics of the role. For example, if a child said, or sang, more than 79 words, he or she became a chorus soloist at a higher rate of pay.

**Rehearsals**

A lot of preparation is involved in stage productions. Performers have to learn their parts, and then have to integrate them into a clearly defined production. Unlike a film production, theatre performances are performed as written, and there is no opportunity to rewrite parts as the production is being made. Also, there is no opportunity for a second take if it doesn't work the first time, so rehearsals are thorough and actors have to know their lines and their movements on stage precisely.

For opera, the link with a school was opportune: the music teacher liaised with the company and taught the parts during music periods to selected music students. Rehearsals at the theatre follow, with two per week in the early stages (about four week before opening). In the final week there is a piano dress rehearsal, a sitzprobe (or singing rehearsal on stage), then two dress rehearsals. The following night is free, and then the performance begins.

When children are involved in a performance the rehearsal schedule is adjusted so they rehearse first, and are then able to go
home. This, of course, may not be possible for the dress rehearsals. In no case does a performance follow a rehearsal.

The drama theatre rehearsals were similar, extending for a month prior to opening. They rehearsed in a four hour period from school to early evening. There were twenty rehearsals, on five days for four weeks. Included in this were 12 full rehearsals. For the musicals children were released from school during school hours. They were called at individual times and returned to class if they were no longer required. These rehearsals were from 10 am to 2 pm with a break for lunch.

Schedule of Work

Both companies adopt an alternating system for child performers. In the case of opera, performances are on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday so children are not expected to work every night. For the drama theatre, two sets of characters were employed for actors to the age of 14 years. Each set performed three nights per week. Performers over the age of 14 do six performances per week. Adults work a 30 hour week and children 15 hours.

In both interviews it was pointed out that children tend to be written into the first quarter of drama and opera works. They are sent home early in most productions, and so are generally finished by 9 pm.

Breaks for rest

Breaks every 20 - 30 minutes are provided. Also, as required by Actors' Equity, there is a break half way through rehearsals.

Location

Performances and rehearsals took place in specific theatres in the metropolitan area. One instance of a tour involving children was cited. In this case, performances were in theatres in each of the cities visited.

Supervision

In both cases specific personnel are employed to care for children. In one case a 'dresser' is employed to sign them in and look after them until they are handed back to the parents. In the other case a teacher is employed for the same purpose.
Safety

Both interviewees stressed the care taken to ensure that high safety standards were adhered to. The interviewee from the opera company stated,

In night scenes ... we use low wattage lights on walkways. Also reflective tape and safety barriers. Stage hands are placed at strategic points to hand actors up and down steps.

Travel

This was not taken into account in hours of work or salary. Parents provided transport for children.

Parents

Many of the parents are involved in theatre or stage themselves, and so are very familiar with conditions. Others, however, "push their children." Companies were wary of choosing a child if the parents were pushy. Neither interviewee expressed any concern with parental attitudes to the employment of their children.

The Future

Both companies considered that the limited employment of children would continue in the future. The drama theatre will produce a play involving children in 1990. It will be scheduled in September so that rehearsals can take place in the school holidays. There will be only two parts for children. The other company has long term plans for more involvement of children in productions, but not in the next twelve months.

Attitudes to the Employment of Children

The two interviewees for this part of the survey differed in their perception of the value of children. One stated,

We don't seek out plays with children. They are an administrative nightmare, but we wouldn't knock back a good play because it had children in it. There is a greater level of responsibility and you can't afford not to do the right thing. We would go to overkill to make sure children's interests are looked after.

The other implicitly acknowledged the same difficulties, but had a longer term view of the context in which children are employed:

It is essential to have children. We treat them as any other performer. Some are destined for long careers. We nurture and teach them. Some
Children in Live Performance Page 8

keeper - it is essential to avoid any dangers. Children are a very important part of productions.

Proposed Legislation

One interviewee noted that some modern operas had questionable scenes and it would be inappropriate for children to take part in them.

Observations

1. The companies interviewed for this component of the survey appear to maintain a high standard of care for children who are employed. Guidelines which were developed some time ago are still in use. Both use Actors' Equity contracts, and provide a sound level of supervision for children.

2. No parents with children in stage productions were interviewed for this section of the survey. Parental views, and the views of other personnel in the industry, would be required to determine whether the opinions expressed and information presented are representative of the industry as a whole.
CHILDREN IN
FILM DRAMAS AND DOCUMENTARIES

Introduction

There are few producers and directors of film dramas and documentaries utilizing children in Perth. The television stations are no longer active in this area, and few commercial companies produce material involving children. Those that operate are well known in the industry. In the government arena, West Ed Media produces many documentaries of an educational nature, but the ABC has located all television production facilities of children's programmes in the eastern States.

Because of the smallness of the industry, there is some difficulty in reporting the results of the survey without unintentionally identifying the companies concerned. Nevertheless every effort has been made to preserve anonymity for the interviewees in this section of the report.

Seven producers were interviewed for this part. One was with the Government, and the remainder were independent or were associated with independent companies. Because they were all involved in producing film dramas and documentaries involving children, it was decided to report on them as one group. In addition, results of interviews with parents of children and with casting agents and industry representatives have been reported here. These additional results provide different perspectives on the issues reported.

Selection of Children

One producer described the process of selection as follows:

You go through the script and find you need two children. You go through the agent's books or ring them for photos of children, or else you have your own casting file, and you go through that. You find someone who looks right. You choose three or four children - someone is bound to be away, sick, or can't act. Then you audition them. First of all you get to know the child and make them comfortable, talk to them, walk them through the piece, then put them in front of the camera. Then we do another piece with me in the director's chair: so they don't have the security of me there. Unsuccessful applicants are informed, but if I can't find any one suitable I go to a pet school and pick a couple of likely kids. I get the phone number of parents and ask for an audition.... After rehearsal we go to the studio and record it.
The requirements for a child to be suitable include conformity with the script, ability to learn lines, willingness to rehearse, and ability to take direction.

Children are chosen in a variety of ways, through agents, direct approaches to individuals and through approaches to schools. All producers have adopted a variety of approaches to the initial recruitment of children, but they all utilise auditions for the final selection.

Casting Agents: Casting agents were used extensively. There are several agents in Perth who specialise in lead actors, and others cater mainly for extras. Some cater for both. All the agents interviewed had children on their books, but some had very few. One agent had only 10 children under 16 years of age and another had about 12. Another firm, however, had over 300 children on their books and in circulation. This firm supplied both lead actors and extras.

In response to a request from a company, the agents send out photographs of the children on their books, and if the producer (or casting director) likes the appearance of the child, he or she is interviewed. An audition may be part of the selection process, in which case the agent informs the parent of the location of the audition and the clothes to be worn.

When contacted by a company for actors, the agent seeks to select children who will fulfill the requirements of the role. Several children may be advised to try out for the role, even though none may get it.

Direct Approaches to Individuals: Although this is not favoured by the agents, it is sometimes adopted by producers. They may use children known to them: in one case a child was chosen by a director after a chance meeting on holidays. This approach is less common in film dramas and documentaries than in commercials.

Schools: Producers may send their casting director to schools which specialise in drama education. This includes the government schools which have special drama courses, private drama academies and non-government schools which have a reputation for drama education.

Contracts

All the producers and directors interviewed used contracts when employing children. Most used the Western Australian Actors Equity contract, but one firm used a New South Wales version on
the grounds that there are no regulations regarding the employment of children in the industry in this state. The contract relates to the type of product and the duration of using it. For a film drama, there may be additional payments for the child if the film was to be shown more than once on TV, for example. Fees are negotiable, and there is a minimum fee (for children, this is usually 50% of the adult fee), with personal margins being paid on top of this minimum for skill and reputation. For children, however, the fee paid is usually the minimum. Lead child actors would be paid approximately $60 per day, or $213 per week, the minimum Equity fees.

If the child is on an agent's books, the agent will negotiate the contract on his or her behalf, but the parent or guardian must sign for films. The agent will discuss the contract with the producer, usually over the phone. Agreement is reached on rates of pay, hours, days and week employed, and so on. The contract is written up according to these negotiations. None of the contracts made provision for matters such as hours of education or recreation in long shoots, and one agency considered that this was a matter that would be given attention in future contracts.

Location

Film dramas and documentaries are shot both on location and in studios. Country locations were usually shot within easy travelling distance of the metropolitan area, although the location of documentaries depended upon the nature of the material. In such cases, however, the cast for the documentaries was obtained mainly in situ.

Facilities provided on location vary according to the length of the shoot. For long shoots a van is provided for the children to rest and study in. The van may be towed to the studio for the same purpose there. One van so used for a cast of four leading children was approximately 4 metres by 2 metres, according to a parent interviewed. In addition a converted bus was used for makeup and wardrobe.

Schedule of Work

The issue of hours of work is complicated by the diversity of shoots. Some are completed in a day or two, such as for documentaries, but others go on for two or three months. The longer the shoot, the more attention needs to be given to matters such as education and recreation.
The hours which children worked varied considerably. A benchmark for employing children existed in the Actors Equity guidelines, which were well known in the industry, and several people noted that in an eight hour day children should do only four hours work plus two hours school and two hours recreation. With a couple of exceptions, these guidelines were given only lip service by those in the industry. The producers who outlined practices which appeared to most closely approximate these guidelines were associated with government agencies.

It is impossible to generalise about the actual hours worked. Specific examples will therefore be given to illustrate the diversity and to highlight different practices. One producer reported on a two day production in which the cast were on location at 6.30 am for costuming. Shooting commenced at 9 am and continued to 11.30 am with short breaks for resetting lights, etc. Lunch was at 11.30 and shooting resumed at 1 pm with a shorter shooting session, although shooting of children didn't resume until 3 pm for another hour. The children finished at 4 pm, although shooting of adult actors continued till 8 pm.

A parent reported the following schedule for a shoot on location for a film drama:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>Pickup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>Makeup on location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>Start shoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>Morning tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>Resume shoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Finish Shoot, go to lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Resume shoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>Finish for the day. Return home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: afternoon tea provided if working after 6 p.m.

This parent was very dissatisfied with the long hours his son worked on the set. Despite being informed that the company would adhere to Actors Equity guidelines, which required an eight hour day, of which four hours would be filming, two hours education and two hours recreation, he found that his son was working up to 12 hours a day, and ten hours a day for extended periods. Working weeks of 50 hours were not uncommon during the shoot. Added to this, there was little time for recreation. The only break during which the children were able to play, according to this parent, was during the lunchhour, when they would play ball games with the crew for about fifteen minutes.

An interviewee from the company for which this child worked reported that the hours children worked in this production varied with their ages. The younger ones worked 30 hours per week, and the older ones 40-45 hours per week. Travelling time was on top
Shooting was scheduled according to Victorian guidelines for this film.

Most of the children who had experienced long shoots had worked for the one producer, and some of the parents who were interviewed were concerned at the long hours the children were on the set. One parent commented,

She was treated well and they looked after her. The hours worked though were inexcusable. They have money to go through and watch that.

Even for short shoots of four days, a ten-hour day for a 15 year old girl (one of a cast of four leads - the other three were adults) was reported by one producer. The schedule commenced daily at 9 am with the children getting wardrobed. Between 10 and 11 am rehearsals were conducted, then shooting took place between 11 and 12. Lunch from 12 to 1 for some of the actors (while others were used for another scene, to keep the crew going) was followed by another one-hour rehearsal. The cycle continued in the afternoon. Shooting finished at 7 p.m.

**Shooting before 7 am**

Few producers reported shooting before 7 am. Occasional dawn shots are a necessity in some scenes, but in most films the actors are not required for shooting until well after 7 am. Time of departure from home, however, is another matter, especially for country locations. A long drive to location can mean a start between 5.30 and 6 am. If this is accompanied by a late finish, children may not return home until 8 pm. This is of little significance for one or two days, but for extended periods there may be an effect on the child.

A case of a 3 am start for a seven year old child who was to be driven to a country location for a dawn shoot was reported by one interviewee. This followed a day on which the actor had worked late, and had not arrived home until 11 pm.

**Weekends and Holidays**

Few shoots occur on weekends. One producer did extend shooting to a six day week for a film some years ago, but most productions are Monday to Friday. Two producers said they preferred to schedule film dramas during the holidays when the pressure of school is off the children. In both cases the shoots were completed in the holidays. This is not possible with very long shoots, however, and alternative arrangements have to be made for schooling. This is discussed below.
Rehearsals

Unlike stage productions, the script for film dramas can be modified up until the time of shooting. Consequently extended rehearsals prior to shooting are less useful. One interviewee stated that children were employed for rehearsals for two weeks prior to the commencement of shooting. Another noted that, for a ten day shoot, rehearsals occupied two days prior to shooting. During this time the producer walked around the bush location with the children, pointing out what was going to happen. There was no attempt to have extensive rehearsals in these two days; instead, the producer attempted to gain the children's confidence. On the day of shooting, the children rehearsed immediately before the shoot. The interviewee stated that there may be up to four rehearsals: once for the director, once for the actors, once for the camera, and once for everybody. The number of rehearsals depends on the complexity of the scene, including the number of characters, the setting, the cameras being used, the amount and nature of movement, and the lines being spoken.

The length and thoroughness of rehearsals varies with the type of media being used and the location. Film shots are seldom more than 45 seconds, so rehearsals can be brief and specific. Video shots may have three cameras, so a whole scene can be done at once: a 2 - 3 minute shoot. Consequently rehearsals for video must be more thorough. In situations where the studio has to be booked and the shoot must be made quickly, more thorough rehearsals are also needed.

If specific routines are involved in a shoot, such as dances, then rehearsals may precede the production. These rehearsals may take place at the dancing school or other venue under the guidance of the producer. Also, additional rehearsals for one production were sometimes called on weekends. These would last for a couple of hours. Rehearsing immediately before the shoot is easier: children don't have to remember their movements and lines overnight.

One producer reported that rehearsals were taped if video was being used. This then becomes a take, and so the children may be able to be released earlier. If it is film, however, everything must be right before shooting can commence because of the greater cost of the medium.

Breaks for Rest

Industrial associations in the film and television industry have regulations governing the length and timing of breaks. Producers
stressed the importance of flexibility, however, because it may not be possible to stop in the middle of a complicated scene. One producer stated,

Most crews are flexible. They (the crew) don't make you stick to that especially when working with children. The crew can go five hours before a break.

This interviewee pointed out that children who work in his company are given breaks after two hours, with a one hour lunch break. Morning and afternoon tea was provided and

For breaks, we take them right away from what they are doing and play games, etc with them to relax them.

Filming of adult actors may continue while the children have the break.

Many interviewees noted that young children require adequate rest if effective performance is to be obtained: the children can't be tired. Even so, some producers seem to work children for long periods with only limited breaks. As reported above, in one production children had no formal break for afternoon tea between 2 pm and 6 pm. A common view seems to be that breaks for scene and lighting changes are adequate for the children. Sometimes the timing and extent of breaks are at the mercy of the weather. For one production it was noted, "Many scenes had animals as well and with inclement weather this can affect the schedule, so you have to cut corners."

An adult actress reported that local producers plan poorly:

They are very bad at giving breaks to actors of any age. The really big shoots from over east are very well organised. The local small producers are poorly organised and breaks are not carefully scheduled. The locals tend to plan poorly and breaks don't always occur. Meals are often much later and sometimes forgotten. Food is not always appropriate (for children). For small shoots they will go and buy food from a shop. Adequate but not always appropriate.

Supervision

All film drama producers reported that children were well supervised at all times. Usually a specific person was appointed by the producer to care for the children. In one case a nurse was employed for a three day shoot. Another producer could not identify a specific person, but said, "A variety of people are used. We arrange for someone who is good with kids". The criteria for being good with kids were not investigated, however. In this case costume people were often used in this role. One producer
reported that her former employer, a major government television station, ensured that the children had a chaperone while they were on the premises. It was a common practice to have both males and females in the crew so that children of both sexes would be appropriately cared for.

A producer for a shoot which lasted for an extended period stated,

In the dressing rooms the makeup artist, tutor, dialogue coach are responsible. It is like a conveyor belt: Tutor to makeup to dresser to tutor to assistant director. At all times we ensured they were supervised.

All parents who were interviewed expressed satisfaction with the level of supervision. They identified the extensive nature of supervision and the manner in which the crew attempted to relax the children and establish a rapport with them.

**Education**

For short shoots, producers did not provide for the education of the children even if the shoots were in school time. On longer shoots, however, tutors were employed to provide for the children's education. This was a cause for concern among some parents of child actors. As soon as parts were confirmed, the tutor, a qualified teacher, was given the task of going to the children's schools to get a schedule of homework. It was the tutor's job to collect the children daily from their homes and return them at the end of the day. One parent stated that problems arose when the tutor was given the role of chaperone as well. "It (tutoring) was very limited after the tutor became a chaperone." This parent reported that his son was three months behind in his schooling as a result of the time spent on the production and that he was considering having him repeat the year of school.

The parent of a child who worked for the same company in another production stated, in relation to schooling, that "This went out the window. There was not enough time for it. The hours weren't adhered to." It is interesting to note that another parent of a child who worked for the same company expressed complete satisfaction with the schooling her daughter received:

They pamper children. There were four hours of tutoring a day. Her schooling hasn't gone down. I only went on set on location a couple of days. I couldn't tell from that but she kept up with her class. As far as I am concerned she put in four hours a day. I might have a different attitude if she was older. I am aware of an older boy whose parents were concerned.
This parent also considered that "the experience outweighs the disadvantage of missing out on a few months of schooling" and "parents knew that (education would suffer) when they went in". These, of course, are clearly value judgments, and the importance placed on schooling will affect the perception of the significance of falling behind.

Safety

The companies had considerable respect for adequate safety standards. Actors Equity guidelines were available to all producers. Safety officers who are accredited by Actors Equity inspect scripts prior to shooting and decide what is needed according to strict rules. Companies made it quite clear that they took no risks with child or adult actors. Dummies were used when danger was a threat, and stunt teams were employed for acts that involved risk. If stunts are performed, there must be a stunt coordinator and a safety officer on site. Actors Equity will not permit actors to work on a site that doesn't have a safety report, or one on which the safety requirements were not being met. Parents expressed no concerns about the safety of their children on sets.

Travel

For long shoots, time for travel was included in the hours for which children were employed, and the children were picked up and delivered daily. With a government film agency, travel time was paid for children who were members of Actors Equity, but not for other children. Another company required the parents to deliver their children to the set.

One producer noted that the children had to be given time to relax after a long trip. This function was performed by other companies by having breakfast and makeup calls before filming began.

The principal issue raised regarding travel was the way in which travel to country locations extended the hours for children. This led to starts before 7 am, yet the child was not home till after 6 pm. For the extended shoot one child was on, this led to increasing tiredness as the shoot progressed, with, according to the parent, a gradual decline in performance.

Parents

The attitude of employers of film dramas and documentaries to parents was reasonably favourable. Most commented that they
tried to avoid pushy parents, but also noted that parents' concerns are allayed early by informing them of what goes on.

Most parents don't realise the amount of work involved and how difficult it is: how stressful and complicated it can be, and how exciting it is. . . . I get parents along after the first shoot. They can see what does on. They are often flabbergasted. They don't realise how complicated it is.

All the producers in this section interviewed about parents expressed satisfaction with the relationships established. One interviewed each parent prior to shooting to point out what would happen and what demands were to be made. "I told them they would hate us by half way through the shoot due to tiredness etcetera on the part of their children." The same producer reported that 99% of parents are cooperative.

Parents' attitudes varied. Some considered that they were very satisfied, while others expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the treatment of their children. Specific issues, such as overwork and lack of education, resulted in considerable dissatisfaction on the part of some parents who were interviewed.

The Future

Some producers had no comment to make on this issue, while others were very specific. One indicated that a repeat series employing the same lead actors was being considered, while another gave a detailed explanation for a declining movie industry in Western Australia. He identified five reasons. These were:

1. The crash of 1987 has resulted in less interest in film making in the financial world.
2. The feature film area is less profitable due to changes in tax provisions (Section 10B)
3. Investment banks are not favoured, and this does not help WA.
4. The television collapse has affected the industry across Australia. It is now critical.
5. The pilots' strike is having an effect.

He stated that

The industry is under increasing financial pressure with the possible exception of advertising. There are smaller budgets. Therefore conditions are harder. Producers are likely to work in shorter time to save money. This will result in increased pressure.
If this view of the future of the industry is accurate, it has implications for the employment of children, particularly with regard to reduced time for shoots and increased pressure.

Proposed Legislation

Interviewees were asked what they would like to see in an act regulating the employment of children. There was agreement among most who responded to this question that legislation should protect the interests of the children. One respondent stated that legislation was not really necessary on the grounds that mistreatment had first had to be shown to have occurred. Others were concerned that the guidelines should be sufficiently flexible to allow producers to employ children. One producer stated that,

> Given the varying demands of the film industry, and even the differences between children of the same ages in terms of experience and energy, it is difficult to put in legislation.

Such flexibility would include varying hours of work for children of different ages. Others stated that guidelines were needed to provide backing for individuals and groups who had a complaint against an employer. It was indicated that the lack of legislation at present prevented those with complaints from being able to take effective action against the offender.

One interviewee reported that

> A lot of pressure can still be put on a kid and still be adhering to equity guidelines. For example, if producers have to give kids time off, they are going to work harder in the time they have them. Or else people are going to try to hide it. You may be able to roster other scenes, but if you can't the crew has to sit around while the kid goes to school.

> It is very much up to the individual child as to ability to cope. If kids are going okay, keep going. If it is legislated to have a day's break after a day's shooting, we would be compromised. A balance is needed.

A benefit of legislation was that it would allow producers to supply scriptwriters with the guidelines and so eliminate problems from the beginning.

Attitudes to Employing Children

Most of the producers interviewed considered that it is harder to work with children than with adults. More patience is needed, extra strategies are required to help them understand and relax, you have to repeat things more often, more problems occur (such as loss of milk teeth by primary school children ruining
continuity), and when you work with the child you also have to work with the parent.

One respondent noted the following problems in employing children:

a) They are untrained actors. Extra time has to be spent on them.

b) They can't work as long as adults without getting tired.

c) The break from their regular life - school, friends, etc - can be a cause of problems.

d) Parents are sometimes difficult to work with.

Some producers regarded working with children as an economic necessity: if the market dictated that there was a demand for films featuring children, then they would be produced. Others stated that they liked working with children even if it was harder. It would seem there is little between these two viewpoints apart from the degree of liking for the task. All producers acknowledged during the interviews the need to establish effective rapport with the children to get the best out of them.

Observations

1. The long hours worked appears to be a cause for concern. Parents and others argued for limits to the hours of work so that the needs of the children are met. Legislation for this purpose would clarify the situation for all parties.

2. At present the contents of the contract are very important, because they set down the only conditions governing the employment of children. If legislation was introduced setting out minimum conditions, the significance of the contract as a means of attaining certain conditions is lessened. It would still be essential for rates of pay, nature of the role, etc., but the parents of child actors would be in a position to ensure that the interests of their child, within the limits of the legislation, were being met.

3. There were strong feelings about the effect of filming on schoolwork and legislation appears to be needed. The Actors Equity guidelines provide a standard in the industry, and if the requirement of two hours a day was met effectively (that is, in blocks of at least an hour at a time) the companies could be seen to be meeting these guidelines. If they were meeting the guidelines and the children were still performing poorly at school, they would be in a strong
position to argue that the problem lay with the child and not the company.

Undoubtedly some aspects of the child's life must change, and perhaps suffer, as a consequence of participation in a film production. Whether education should be an area that is allowed to suffer is a debatable issue. If it is, parents of older children would have to think carefully about their children's future before accepting a role. One producer pointed out the benefits of participation in a film in terms of broadened experience and greater knowledge. If education is going to suffer, these benefits must be weighed up against the loss.

Furthermore, some parents may not have the best long term interests of their children at heart: To what extent should legislation protect the child in the absence of sound decisions by the parent?

4. Facilities in which children can do their schoolwork must be adequate. Minimum standards of accommodation are desirable to ensure the environment in which they work permits them to study without discomfort. Regulations should specify a minimum area per child and teacher.

5. Companies involved in the production of films are rightly concerned that any changes may influence their profitability, and hence their opportunity to continue to produce films. There are, however, reasonable limits which continue to allow them to do this and which also ensure the rights of others are protected. Legislation in the U.K. and other countries, as well as other states, should be examined for the effect it has had on the level of employment of children in the industry.
Children in Modelling

Introduction

Fashion parades frequently use children to model clothes. As part of the survey a producer of fashion parades was interviewed regarding the employment of children in this part of the advertising industry. In addition to this interview, modelling agents and parents contributed to a review of this area.

Recruitment and Selection of Children

The parade producer recruited all children from model agencies. While it would be possible to call for auditions for a big job, it was more usual to select from photographs or take the agent's advice on selection. The kind of child who is suitable for the job needs to have personality but be well behaved. Children don't have to be exceptionally pretty or handsome, because that may alienate the audience from them. Personality was the key factor on which selection was based, according to the producer: if they demonstrated that, the audience loved them.

Parents are an important criterion in the selection of children. The producer avoids parents who are 'frustrated performers' themselves. The preferred parents are ones who are as professional as the adult models. They arrive on time, have a change of clothes ready, help with rehearsals at home, etc. I usually check with the model agent on what parents are like. There are some very professional children around.

Children who have attended modelling classes and so have some training are preferred because they are better able to cope with choreography and direction.

Numbers and Ages

In the last 12 months the producer had used about 30 children aged 4 to 14. A spread of children was employed, and they were used in pairs by sex and age: 4 year olds, 8 year olds, 10 year olds and 14 year olds.
Contracts

Contracts are not used. According to the producer, there is no demand for them, and there has never been a request for them. Model agents handle all aspects of the employment. One reason put forward for not using contracts was that the furious pace of the industry required rapid changes in personnel for fashion parades. It would be very difficult to adhere to contracted models. The producer explained the problem as follows:

I might book ten people initially and end up with only two of the original ten because of illness etc. I might put a hold on ten people up to a year in advance. But they may get married, go overseas, get a better offer, and so on. So you can easily lose a large number. Changes are amazing. You can get to a rehearsal and have a model unable to come. If you are tied down by licenses or contracts too strictly it would be very limiting. It would make my job virtually impossible. Little children get chicken pox, have car crashes, granny gets ill, etc.

The absence of contracts in this area was confirmed by modelling agencies.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals are usually held after school. Children are fitted between 4 and 4.30 p.m. and rehearsals are held between 5.30 and 7.30 (at the latest) on the same day. After their rehearsal, children are released and the producer continues with the adults. For parades involving only children, the rehearsal may take place at the modelling school. Once again, this would be after school for a couple of hours, under the guidance of the choreographer.

Schedule of Work

The schedule for fashion parades typically consists of several short presentations during the course of the day. The parades are scheduled, usually at set intervals - such as 11.30, 12.30 and 1.30 - and the cast perform, go off for the intervening period, return and perform, and so on. Each session may be 20 to 30 minutes.

Children aged 5 to 14 would work on Saturday mornings and sometimes on Thursday evenings. In a 20 minute parade they may make three or four appearances. Preschool aged children may be used on other days of the week. In one recent parade, children aged 2 and 5 performed in eight parades on Thursday, Friday and
Saturday, and two school age children were added on the Saturday for three performances.

Location

Nearly all parades are in shopping centres. The producer said that she never conducted parades outside the metropolitan area. In addition to the shopping centre parades, annual parades for a bridal fair are conducted. One problem with location is the quality of changerooms. Often conditions are cramped. All the models change in the one room: it is easier to cue children if they are all together. Also, separate changerooms would be more expensive, and the shopping centres would be unwilling to supply them. Under these circumstances some children may be coy about changing: but their parents are with them, and they are placed in a corner, boys with bigger boys and girls with bigger girls.

Supervision

Mothers look after children in the breaks between parades. In the dressing room, children are dressed either by mothers or by a professional dresser. While children are backstage, a backstage manager (or stage cue) supervises the children and makes sure they go on at the right time.

Safety

Use of the catwalk is the only potential problem, according to the producer. While there is a danger that little children could walk off the end of the catwalk, this was considered unlikely. Unsafe catwalks would not be used.

An unresolved issue exists in the insurance cover for fashion parades. At present this is a very grey area, with no definite allocation of responsibility for the cover of child or adult models. Shopping centres consider that public liability provisions of their insurance cover them; others think that the models are self-employed, and so are responsible for their own insurance cover, while the producer may be held responsible. If the producer accepts legal responsibility for the employment, as required in the licence to employ a child, she may also be required to provide insurance cover. This is an issue the industry needs to resolve.
Travel

Parents transport children to all venues.

Parents

As with other sections of the industry, parents are judged on their cooperation and support for their children. In the fashion industry parents are relied upon to arrive on time, bring the right accessories and shoes and socks to supplement the garments being modelled, and attend rehearsals and fittings. The producer worked with a relatively small group of parents, most of whom were used consistently.

The Future

No changes were envisaged for the next 12 months. Demand for fashion parades fluctuates, but it was considered that there would be no significant changes overall.

Proposals for Legislation

The producer considered that modelling should not interfere with education. Also, rates of pay should be sufficient to cover the work that the parents perform in transporting their children, supervising them while at the centre, and assisting in dressing, etc. According to the producer there is a danger of parents allowing their children to do too many free jobs.

Attitudes to Employing Children

The producer considered that if children are well behaved and parents are good there is a place for them in fashion parades. They learn a lot through participation: the importance of punctuality, the responsibilities accompanying performing for money, the ability to take direction from a choreographer. "They learn a lot and love it".

Observations

1. The person who signs the licence, thereby accepting responsibility for the child, may also be accepting responsibility for insurance cover. This is an issue the
industry needs to clarify in all areas of advertising and entertainment.

2. Changeroom conditions may be less than satisfactory in some situations. Because of the difficulties associated with the provision of separate changerooms, insistence on separate changerooms for girls and boys may result in children being left out of parades altogether. According to the producer, no one has complained, and the presence of the parents would ensure adequate supervision.

3. Interviews with parents and others in the industry would be desirable to establish the need for any regulation of the industry beyond what is being done. A more extensive survey of appropriate individuals and groups should be conducted.
Children in Print Advertising

Introduction

Children are extensively used for still photographs in print advertising. For this part of the survey, two principals of photographic firms were interviewed, one of whom had used children extensively over the last 12 months. Some of the photographs are for fashion advertising, but lifestyle advertisements are more important - family scenes predominate in this. In addition, others in advertising agencies who used still photographs for advertising provided information for this section.

Recruitment and Selection of Children

Children were usually selected through model agencies. One of the photographers also used children of personnel in the business. It was reported that the children doing the modelling are often the children of models. The principal criterion for selection is appearance, followed by behaviour and attention span.

Numbers and Age

One of the photographers said he rarely shot children, but the other used children frequently, with one or two children being used each fortnight. The whole range of ages featured in photographs.

Contracts

These are never used. The agency is contacted and supplies children. The photographer makes sure the children have never been used in an advertisement for a competing product. Children are paid an hourly rate, which is approximately $60 to $70 per hour.

Schedule of Work

Sessions are short, children being booked by the hour. A one-hour maximum would be typical. Often the child would be shot in the first 5 minutes, according to one photographer. There was common agreement that most shoots would be about 20 - 25 minutes. There would then be a break when the children can play or have something to eat. There is no need for rehearsals.
Shoots occur after school and early in the evening. They try to avoid school hours, although one photographer said he would have no trouble getting a child out of school for a morning shot. In winter time, with early sunsets it is difficult to confine shooting to after school hours because they would not be able to start until 4.30. Big shoots are scheduled for school holidays. Such photographs may accompany TV commercials, the still photographer taking part in a shoot after the film company has finished their work. Parents may be given the choice of times to come in for photographs if the photographer is doing a spread for a 2-4 page advertisement and a number of models are being used.

Advertising agencies confirmed this pattern of shooting. One respondent noted that parents will often lie about the reason the child is being taken out of school - saying, for example, that it is for the dentist.

**Location**

Shoots occur both in the studio and on location. No preference was expressed, and the choice depended upon the nature of the job.

**Supervision**

Parents accompany the children. The parent may wait in the waiting room while the child is being shot, particularly if the photographer feels the parent's presence affects the child's responsiveness to being photographed.

**Safety**

An interesting perspective on safety was presented by one photographer. While there was little danger in being photographed, he observed safety requirements for different activities in case the advertisements received negative publicity. Therefore children photographed riding bicycles had to wear helmets and children were never shown near a steaming kettle. Others interviewed indicated there were no dangers in being photographed.

**Travel**

Parents transport children to all venues. One interviewee stated that if shooting is on location, a travel allowance is paid.
Parents

Two interviewees mentioned that some parents are very pushy, and these are kept away from the shoot, because they can end up shouting at their children. The photographer tries to avoid upset children:

I express concern to them about the way they treat their kids. Most parents will sit in here while I work out there (in the studio). Generally, pushy parents are in the majority. They urge their kids on. A child that cries needs half an hour for their eyes to lose their redness. They have to come back tomorrow.

The Future

While one interviewee considered that the declining retail orientation of Perth was causing a fall in the level of photo work being done in the city, others thought that there would be no change in the next twelve months.

Proposed Legislation

As with interviewees in other sections of the industry, those in the photographic area were concerned that having to apply for a licence every time they wanted to photograph a child would be too restrictive. One respondent considered that a blanket licence was essential, but added, "You must show you are worthy of getting a licence".

Attitudes to Employing Children

Most respondents in this area expressed a liking for working with children. One said it was no harder nor easier than using adults. One noted that he would never use the same child, even if he was brilliant, on the grounds that it would lead to the child becoming vain. The same person mentioned problems in having to work around the unique schedules of some children, such as afternoon naps, and therefore having to negotiate alternative times with the parent.

Observations

1. The brevity of photographic shoots limits the number of problems that can occur in relation to employing children.
2. Photographers do not approve of parents who try to encourage their children to respond while on the set. This conflict of professionalism and parental concern obviously leads to some minor conflict which appears to be resolved by placing the parent in the waiting room. This may be indicative of the speed of work: the detailed description of the task which accompanied film dramas and commercials seems not to occur with still photographs.

3. Legislation which provides flexibility for photographers is preferred by the industry. This is consistent with views in other parts of the industry.
CHILDREN IN TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

Introduction

The number of companies working with children in the advertising field is much greater than the numbers in the other fields. In order to effectively survey companies involved in utilising children for television commercials, key personnel from eight advertising agencies were interviewed. This gave a range of agencies, including large international companies as well as small local companies. In addition, interviews were conducted with production companies which specialise in the production of television commercials. These companies are contracted by the advertising agencies to perform the actual production of the commercial. All companies contacted had used children for commercials. The frequency and conditions of usage varied considerably, however, providing a comprehensive overview of the nature of employment of children across the advertising industry. Others to be interviewed for this section included a government department which frequently produced advertisements, parents and casting agencies.

Children tended to be employed in two major ways, first in the key role in the advertisement, and secondly as supporting roles in portrayals of families - 'mum, dad and the kids'. Children are used more extensively in the second role. Speaking roles are much less common than non-speaking roles.

Recruitment and Selection of Children

The larger advertising agencies tended to rely on casting and modelling agencies for children. The type of child required is determined by the script. They would brief the modelling agency on the age, sex and size of the child or children required. They would also specify the *look* of the child. They may select from photographs first, or they may ask the agency to do the initial selection for them. Large firms will base the selection of the child on market research: surveys are conducted to determine the most effective age, appearance and size of child to impact on a particular audience.

Ability to perform the task is also important, but secondary to appearance. This involves acting, movement and voice, including
diction, although there is little demand for voice. One interviewee noted that

little kids can't act. Therefore they do non-speaking parts. They become models or extras.

The model or casting agency is asked to send children in to the advertising agency. This becomes the audition. The model agent or casting agent will inform the parents to dress the children in a certain way, and describes the nature of the role to parents. Parents are asked to accompany the child to the advertising agency. They are interviewed for 5 - 10 minutes. The producer at the agency talks to them to see if the children are able to respond to the camera, etc. Shy children will probably not be used. Auditions are usually not paid for: it is regarded as equivalent to an interview for getting a job.

Some agencies use personal contacts for employing children. The lower the budget, the greater the likelihood of using relatives or children of friends. Small agencies are more likely to use such children. Also, when bidding for contracts, production companies may make non-commercial advertisements to demonstrate their abilities. For these products family members or children of employees may be used. One government department which produces commercials frequently for television is forced, through low budgets, to seek to use children of employees and friends of the producer.

Another company was unable to find a suitable actor through the agencies and turned instead to looking for a suitable preschool child at shopping centres. Parents were approached and were asked to phone the agency if they were interested. One child was eventually chosen in this way.

Directors may go to considerable lengths to establish rapport with the children. One director worked with a girl over a three week period to get her comfortable, including taking her to her home. Directors who were interviewed stated that it was common to spend time talking to the children and familiarising them with the crew.

A parent reported that auditions for casting are the worst part of working in the industry because of the waiting involved.

The agency sends you information - they are casting children aged 3-4 wearing size 4. They send you along to see if you are the right one, and when you get there they make you wait while they try to cast them. Instead of starting with children they start with adults. I have been in twice already and had to wait for hours. They film the child to
see how she looks in the TV. This is a little bit of a pain. It is beautiful when the child has been chosen from the books.

Ages

The whole range of ages, from babies to 15 year olds, was used, depending upon the nature of the advertisement. Given the small sample of advertising agents interviewed, it was not possible to establish a definite distribution of ages employed, but agents estimated that children of school age (6 - 15) were most commonly employed.

Numbers

Quite large numbers of children have been employed for advertising purposes. While individual agencies reported relatively small numbers, film and video production companies reported much larger numbers. One such company reported having shot between 75 and 100 children in the last 12 months, although this included a class of children for advertisements for a government department. Individual agents reported from none in the last 12 months to 12 children. It was noted by the agents that there is less demand for children for television commercials due to the small retailing and manufacturing base of the local economy.

Contracts

As with film dramas, contracts are drawn up by the agency in consultation with the modelling or casting agency. Contracts are necessary for television advertising because of the variables: the length of run and the number of repeats of the advertisement, the number of states it will appear in, the experience of the child, whether or not it is a speaking part, and the need to exclude the actor from other advertising as a consequence of appearing in the advertisement.

The contract specifies hours, nature of the job, period the contract runs for and rollovers. Contracts are normally for a 12 month period, and if the advertisement is to run beyond that, then a rollover clause is included, for which the actor will be paid an additional fee. As a result of this diversity, a wide range of fees is paid. In general, the minimum Equity rates are paid. These range from approximately $100 for a four hour call to over $400, depending on the nature of the role. Standard Actors Equity contracts are used, although one interviewee reported that he had drafted a special contract for an advertisement involving travel overseas with the actor and his parent. This contract provided for three years' use of the commercial without additional payment. In
this case the client may have received less favourable treatment than if an Actors Equity contract had been used. Normally the agent signs on behalf of the parent and child, although in some instances the parents sign.

For extras, according to one informant, there is no standard Actors Equity contract. There seems to be less need for a contract for extras because, unlike actors, there are no restrictions on the use of their talent. Children acting as family members in lifestyle advertisements would be regarded as extras, and so may not be covered by a contract. One advertising agency representative, however, reported that the standard Equity contract for actors was used in order to keep track of records and rollover payments.

Two parents who were interviewed about the experiences of their children as actors in commercials reported that they were not aware of contracts. It is possible that the agent made the arrangements on the parents' behalf without informing them. Certainly, industry interviewees frequently stated that the agents were responsible for signing contracts, in contrast to the drama film industry, in which the parent or guardian must sign. A member of the executive of Actors Equity pointed out, however, that some agencies shoot commercials without providing contracts and without paying the children adequately.

One parent considered that the secrecy surrounding the fees and the conditions of the job is in marked contrast to her experiences in another state, where all these things were made very clear by the casting agent. She did state that this may have been a characteristic of the particular agent rather than a characteristic of the industry as a whole.

**Schedule of Work**

Children are employed for half-day (four hour) or full-day (eight hour) calls. It is unusual to require a child for more than a half-day call, although it does happen. For one successful series of short commercials, shooting required two full days.

Children arrive an hour or two after the crew commences. They are advised what clothes to wear and what accessories to bring for the job. They may be asked to bring several changes of clothes in case there is a colour clash. On arrival, costumes and makeup are arranged, and the director and others talk to the children and ensure they are not stressed. If there are no lines involved, a quick rehearsal is followed by the shoot.
Shooting takes place in short bursts of 15 to 30 minutes, with lighting and scene changes to the set while the child takes a break or rehearses the next scene if necessary. A child may start at 9.30 am and finish at 1 pm for a half day shoot, or 4.30 for a full day shoot. Nearly all the interviewees stated that a child would be worked only 1 to 2 hours at the most. The total time spent doing a shoot is important: one director stated that it costs between $2000 and $10,000 per hour for shooting, and so speed is important.

A government department advertisement which required a baby for a water safety advertisement was shot using two similar babies to avoid overtaxing the children. If one of the children tired, the other was used while the first had a break with its mother.

Parental views of schedules indicated that calls can go on beyond the scheduled times. One parent considered that in some cases shoots which should have been cancelled and rescheduled have continued because they can't afford to start again.

**Breaks**

Shoots are followed by breaks. A typical situation is a one hour shoot followed by a half hour break, then another one hour shoot. On a full day shoot, lunch, morning and afternoon tea are provided. Two agents stated that no breaks were necessary for short shoots - food was always on the set if anyone wanted it. As most shoots are short, there appears to be no need for meal breaks.

One independent producer reported that the process of shooting was as follows:

> We work a couple of hours then break for three hours then work another couple of hours. We rehearse, shoot, break, rehearse. In the break the child goes outside. I would sit with him, get his confidence, talk to him. In a half day call we would work an hour, break for half an hour, then work for an hour.

A parent's view of breaks was that local producers are not as organised in scheduling breaks, compared with larger companies from the eastern states which plan better and provide appropriate breaks.

**Location**

Few commercials are shot in the country. Location depends on
preferred because the environment can be controlled and so
shoots are most common in studios, although work on location
forms a significant proportion of the shooting done. Given the cost
of a shoot, control of as many variables as possible is obviously
desirable.

Supervision

All but one of the people interviewed in relation to the production
of commercials involving children identified the parent or
guardian as the supervisor of the child. One producer stated that
the Director's Assistant looked after the children, but also noted
that the children were normally accompanied by the parent. It
was an expectation by most, however, that the parent was
responsible for caring for the child. One agent clarified the role of
the parent:

We insist on the child's parent being there. . . . There have been no
shoots that I have been on that this is not the case. You must have the
parents there: their child needs someone to relate to and make feel
comfortable. We normally brief parents: we get agreement as to what
is required. We ask the parent if she would like to be on set, how they
feel, how the child would feel.

We specify what each person's role is on the set. We ask parents not to
interfere with the set, touch equipment, interfere with the shoot.
They can only communicate with the director and producer. If the
parents object to anything, they can do so to the director. Rehearsals
are to allay parents.

A parent who was interviewed commented that supervision was
more adequate for film shoots that for commercials. Her
observation that supervision in commercial productions is 'ad hoc'
would be consistent with the view of those in the industry.

Education

According to one parent, companies never try to avoid schooltime,
and this is consistent with the views of some companies, which
reported that they had no problems in obtaining release from
school for children. Other companies, however, indicated that they
tried to avoid shooting in school time and would schedule a shoot
on the weekend to achieve this, if necessary.

Actors Equity maintains that schooling must be provided even if
the shoot is only for one day. The employer must liaise with the
school, and must have a trained teacher. Many companies would
apparently be infringing this requirement.
Safety

Standards of safety are determined by safety officers who are employed by the producer. These officers are accredited by Actors Equity, and supervise safety on each production in liaison with the stunt coordinator, if it is decided that there is a need for stunts. Each production house has a copy of the safety manual, entitled Safety Code, produced by Actors Equity. All responses to the question of safety of children on the set indicated that there were no problems. Interviewees considered that the normal safety provisions were adequate to cater for the needs of all people on the set. Some stressed the need for safety:

There is a lot of high voltage stuff so there are penalties for anyone mucking around. We try to keep talent away from the set.

Parents considered that there were no problems with safety.

Travel

Parents are expected to deliver their children to the location for the shoot if it is in the metropolitan area. If a country location is being used, the agency will arrange for the child to be transported: the parent may deliver the child to the airport, for example, and the producer is in charge of the child for the rest of the day.

One agent noted that if the parents were unable to transport the children she would do it or get one of her assistants to do it. Agreement in writing is made with the parents in these cases to confirm that the child will be collected and delivered. The person to collect the child always goes to the house.

Views on Parents

Perceptions of parents held by people in the advertising industry varied. Some considered that parents were very aware of what was happening, and that they wouldn't put their children with a casting agency if they were not prepared to accept the inevitable rejections that come from auditions. "If they are on the books then they must be aware." Others noted the parents' lack of knowledge of the nature of the industry:

They think it is so glamorous but it is plain hard work. It can be very boring. I inform them. I tell the parents what is involved.

One interviewee reported that the agencies allayed any concerns about employment, and others said the parents expressed no concerns. A couple of those interviewed stated that they took the
"They know from talks and discussions with you that you are suitable to work with their children". One of the parents who was interviewed supported this, stating,

He asked if I was free for a day, and almost described everything that was going to happen. He gave times and everything. He pointed out that they were experienced people and wouldn't waste time.

There was some concern in the industry about the pushy nature of some parents, and agencies sought to avoid such parents. Most agencies expected the parents to be available to supervise their children, but didn't want them interfering:

They are extremely pushy, but necessary. The children perform better if the parents aren't on the set but in the dressing room. Some mothers who enrol their children in acting schools are frustrated actors themselves.

The Future

All the agents were asked if they saw any changes in the next 12 months. All responded that they envisaged no changes. Both producers in film and TV production companies, however, considered that the industry was quiet at present in comparison with previous years. One put this down to the fact that demand for children in commercials varies enormously from year to year.

The government department expressed concern about the cost of actors. As a government department their budget was limited for the cost of commercials, and in contrast to commercials for products, they did not recoup the cost in sales. Consequently they are not in a position to pay full professional rates for actors. If they were forced to pay full rates, they would be unable to produce the commercials.

Proposed Legislation

All those interviewed were asked what they would like to see in legislation for the protection of children. Responses ranged from constructive comments to quite acid opposition to the notion of greater government intervention in the industry. There was genuine concern that any legislation may impede the industry's prospects for profitable production of commercials involving children. Some respondents argued that there was no need for legislation:

No regulation is needed. No one is persecuted in this country. We should make them work harder. Everything is fine regarding employment of children.
Others commented that the small use of children in the advertising industry made it hardly worth the bother to introduce legislation to control their employment. One person noted that legislation should not impose constraints on the time to work with a child. This person suggested that it would be a severe imposition on the industry if the time a child could be on a set was limited to one hour, for example. He also suggested that no penalties should be imposed on working out of school hours.

Comments on what should be included in the Act were limited, but one person stated that a regulation was needed saying that no child should be required to work more than a certain number of hours without having a rest.

Parents, however, were more specific concerning the legislation required. One mother whose daughter had been an actor in commercials noted the following needs:

1) There should be control of hours.
2) There should be proper breaks during the day and from one day to the next.
3) Supervision should be adequate.
4) There should be proper education on long shoots.

One interviewee suggested that child extras should be paid as much as adult extras, because there is no difference in the work performed.

Attitudes to Employing Children

There was a diversity of attitudes among agencies regarding the employment of children. Some enjoyed it while others regarded it as a necessary part of the industry. One person was antagonistic to it:

As W.C. Fields said, never use children or animals. They make production expensive, and extend the life of the shoot. They should be avoided.

The TV producers were more enthusiastic about working with children than the agents. Of the four producers who were interviewed regarding production of commercials, three stated they enjoyed working with them and the other reported that she had no problems working with them.

The producer for the government department noted that it is necessary to be more rigorous with children:
Parents or guardians have to be clear about why we are using the child. . . . We get their permission, and we use a standard clearance form. Supervision and safety have to be careful. We have never done anything very risky.

We have to take more consideration of stress on the child. We have more of a skeleton crew when shooting so it is not intimidating. We hire a director who can get good rapport with children.

Observations

1. Schedules appear to lack any regulation and there is the potential for children to be overworked.

2. Breaks do not appear to be regular nor consistently taken. No minimum length seems to be adhered to. There is the possibility of misuse of children, although given the nature of shoots, it is quite likely that in most cases there would be opportunities for the cast to take breaks during lighting and scene changes. If this is the case the industry would have no qualms in accepting minimum breaks during a shoot.

3. Parents seem dissatisfied with the situation regarding contracts. If these are being signed on their behalf by the casting agency, it would be expected that parents would be informed. Perhaps there is a case for greater accountability to the parent in this situation. With the complex nature of television commercials, care needs to be exercised in ensuring that the rights of actors are protected.

4. Supervision on the set is haphazard. Given the apparently safe nature of the industry, this would seem to provide little cause for concern, but in the event of an accident there may be problems with attributing responsibility. Someone in the industry should be accountable each time a child is employed.

5. Although children may miss school while they do commercials, the period of employment is brief. Ideally schools should be well equipped to deal with this situation through their attendance regulations. It may be necessary, however, to specify procedures producers should follow in
participate in a production. What may be useful is to ensure that the proportion of shooting time to rest time and schoolwork is maintained, so that children work no more than four hours in a day, and have two hours schoolwork and two hours rest according to Actors Equity guidelines. Most commercial shoots would be able to fit into this pattern as they have mainly half day shoots.
CHILDREN IN RADIO

Children in Radio Commercials

Four people were interviewed regarding children's participation in radio commercials and radio drama and education. While two companies - a radio station and an advertising agency - reported no use of children for advertisement, two sound studios reported limited but regular use of children for commercials. Both TV and radio commercials require voices of children; in TV commercials, advertisements in which the child is heard but not seen are produced in sound studios such as the ones which participated in the interviews.

Recruitment and Selection of Children

The advertising agency may produce the commercial themselves. In this case, they select the children for the role or else have the casting agency choose the children. If, however, the agency delegates the production to the sound studio, the studio producer will select the children. The relevant criteria for selection are quality of voice, reading ability, ability to take direction which includes the ability to be relaxed and sound natural. Producers require children who can read fluently and understand the producer's instructions and make the changes to voice as required. Experience in the role is important, as newcomers to the job have difficulty coping with the media initially, according to one interviewee.

Children who have had training demonstrate greater ability at the task. About 80% of children who go into one studio would have had some dramatic or voice training, according to one producer.

Numbers and Ages

One studio reported that they had used four or five children in the past 12 months to produce about twenty advertisements. The other reported using about ten to twenty children to produce about the same number of commercials. Children were aged mainly in the middle to upper primary age range, because this is the age at which it is most effective to use children. Most of the advertisements are directed at the parents, and few commercials for teenagers are written in Perth.

Contracts
Contracts are not used. Children are paid by the hour, for relatively short calls. The standard Equity fee is paid which, for children in radio commercials, is the same as for adults - $124 per hour, or if several products are presented in the hour, $124 per product.

Schedule of Work and Breaks

Sessions are short. While there is a minimum one-hour call, a good reader will be able to do an advertisement in half an hour, but a novice may take up to an hour. One producer noted that one girl who regularly does advertisements can complete a script in twenty minutes. Others have to go over and over to get it right, and in some cases the producer cuts parts of different recordings to make up a satisfactory product.

When the children arrive, the producer introduces them to the people who will be involved in the production. The script is presented, and the nature of the job, and the type of presentation is explained. During this time the producer ensures that the child is kept relaxed. In the studio, the child is seated in the voice over area, and he or she reads the script a couple of times to become familiar with it and to get levels and balance right. Headphones are adjusted for comfort and volume, and the child commences reading.

It is important that the reading is performed at such a pace that it fits within the 29 seconds (for TV commercials) or 30 seconds (for radio commercials). Once it is paced correctly, then the child is coached for emphasis. Recordings are made and a break is taken to listen to the outcomes. Another recording may be attempted to see if it can be done better. One interviewee stated that often a child whose performance could be better will be told that the recordings made in the first session are very good, but "Let's just run through it one more time to see if we can do it even better". Convinced that he or she has done a good job, the child relaxes and performs better.

Recordings for children are usually made out of school hours, or at lunchtime. Occasionally a child will miss school to do a performance, or may miss the beginning or end of the school day.

Because of the brevity of the sessions, there is no problem with breaks for rest.
Location

All work is performed in the studio.

Supervision

The producer from the advertising agency, or the studio producer, is responsible for the child. Usually, for advertisements, only two or three children would be in the studio at a time, and so there is no problem with supervision. The parent is also present, but is not expected to perform any supervisory function.

One interviewee commented that some younger people from the advertising agencies are not mature enough to handle children effectively. Older, more mature producers are more effective at getting a good performance out of the children because they know how to handle them better.

Safety

There are no problems with safety, and no special requirements are followed when children are in the studio. The small numbers involved, and the nature of the equipment in the studio, renders special safety needs for children unnecessary. One interviewee noted that going into the studio would be just like going into an office. Consequently there was no special safety code for producers or actors to follow.

Travel

Parents are expected to bring the children to the studio. Older children may catch a bus to the studio, and so come unaccompanied.

Parents

Parents whose children are performing for the first time may accompany the children to the studio and take part in the description of the job, etc. Parents of experienced children will more usually wait in the waiting room. They are permitted to come in and watch if they wish to. One producer commented on the problem of stage mothers who try to be helpful, but who are more likely to be distracting. Some children have parents in the business, and these can be of assistance in guiding and coaching their children in the studio.
The Future

Both producers who were interviewed considered that there would be no change in the level of employment of children for this kind of work in the next 12 months.

Proposed Legislation

Neither producer reported any special provisions they would like to see in legislation. One stated that "It is a bit of fun in the studio for an hour, and a month later they get $120".

Attitudes to Employing Children

Like adults, there is great diversity in the ability of children to perform the task. Those who are not experienced are sometimes very difficult to work with, and so greater patience is required on the part of the producer. Creativity suffers if the child is not competent at the task: if the child can do the basic reading effectively, the producer can then attempt to present the material in more interesting and different ways.

Observations

1. The short time required to produce a radio commercial or television voice-over minimises the problems that can occur. Added to this, the limited numbers of children involved, and the fact that the sessions can take place out of school hours with little difficulty, indicate that this is an area of the industry which requires little regulation.

2. It seems that children occasionally miss school to perform in radio commercials. If legislation providing for licencing of employers of children for advertising was to be introduced, it would not be worth the employers licence to ask children to come to the studio during school hours: the brevity of recording sessions is such that the task could be readily performed before or after school hours.

3. The limited sample and the absence of parental input into this aspect of the survey limits the generalisability of the results. More comprehensive research is required to confirm the views expressed. It appears, however, that this area is like photography: short sessions with attention to one aspect of performance results in few problems for children or their parents.
Useful information was also obtained on the employment of children for drama and educational programmes, from a producer with a major national broadcaster. The following information therefore comes from the one source. This particular station once employed large numbers of children, but because of cuts to budgets, and the transfer of production to the eastern states, the educational programme has been severely restricted and only a few children have been employed each year, apart from school choirs.

Recruitment and Selection of Children

When large numbers of children were employed, auditions were held by asking teachers in schools to send in 'likely' children. Now that only a few children are needed, auditions are unnecessary. The interviewee stated that station staff are asked if their children can participate, because "They know the requirements for production and know if their children are capable of it."

School choirs are still used for one programme, and to obtain these the Ministry of Education is asked to nominate schools, or individual music specialists are contacted.

Numbers and Ages

Children's ages ranged from 5 to 12 years. Individual children are 6 to 8 years old, and choirs are middle to upper primary (9-12). Only three children are employed each year for a three hour call for acting. Radio dramas are also performed, in which 6 children are used for two three hour calls. Three or four school choirs have been used in the past 12 months.

Contracts

These are used for the individual actors. The parent and the child sign them. Although the child's signature has no legal standing, it makes them a part of the deal. Another producer who was formerly associated with television production involving children in the same station, before children's television production in Western Australia ceased, also commented on the child being party to the contract: it reassured the producers that the child wanted to do it, and wasn't simply being forced into it by an ambitious mother. A tax release form is also signed. The standard
Schedule of Work and Breaks

As noted above, children are employed for three hour calls, which is the minimum call allowed. Younger children are used only for the first 1 - 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) hours. If the child is used for the full period, regular breaks are provided, and the producer ensures the children are rested and get food and drinks. Rehearsals are part of the call: children rehearse and then they are recorded. All choirs are recorded in school time as part of school projects. Dramas may be recorded during or after school hours.

Location

The studio is preferred, but some work is done in schools with the choirs.

Supervision

Large groups of children in choirs require extensive supervision. The producer, the assistant producer and the operator as well as the school teachers who accompany the children, supervise. If there is only one child the parent delivers him or her and the producer takes the responsibility for supervision.

Safety

The general safety conditions in the studio are sufficient for the safety of the children.

Travel

Parents deliver the children to the studio after school hours. They are not paid for this. If a taxi is required, the studio pays for it. School choirs are delivered by bus which the studio pays for. Also, the school receives a small payment when their choirs are used.

Parents

The producer reported that parents are always enthusiastic. Unlike other media productions in which children can be employed, radio is not seen as a 'showbiz thing'. Parents were said to be reliable when checking the script and rehearsing the children. No parent had ever complained.
The Future

No change was expected in the next 12 months. Concern was expressed at the decline in children's productions in the state and the effect of networking on this.

Attitude to Employing Children

The producer regarded working with children as fun:

We are all good at explaining to children and getting good performances out of them. Special training on the part of the children is not required.

Observations

1. As with photography, the calls for children in radio are short and the demands on the children more limited than in television. From the limited data obtained, there would appear to be no problems with regard to employment of children in radio drama and education.

2. There is only one station producing children's drama and education programmes, and even this is limited by a growing emphasis on networking with the consequent production of programmes in the eastern states rather than in Western Australia.

3. Parents views should be sought to confirm the views expressed by the producer interviewed.
CONCLUSION

In this report, the employment of children in the entertainment and advertising industry has been surveyed. The outcomes of the report are not definitive because the limited scope of the survey. Rather than being a judgmental evaluation of the nature of the use of children, it provides a description of the practices and the views of those who participate in the industry.

In some areas of the industry there appears to be little that is objectionable, but in other areas some of the practices have been questioned, especially by parents of the children who work in the industry. Certainly, the lack of regulation leaves the industry open to accusations of misuse of children from which it would be difficult to deliver itself. Also, in the event of misuse, there is little recourse for parents of children and others in the industry to take remedial action.

Accountability seems to be necessary to ensure that those who work with children accept the responsibility of maintaining a minimum quality of care. This accountability may mean the imposition of regulations for the industry. If, as some interviewees claim, there is no need for it, regulation will be an unnecessary burden on an already stressed industry. If this is so, it can be expected that the level of employment of children in the industry will diminish over the months following the introduction of children. This would be a most unfortunate situation as the level of employment of children is already in decline, according to some of the interviewees. Consequently, there will be even fewer opportunities for children to gain the valuable experiences work in the industry can offer. A follow-up survey to determine whether there has been a decline is desirable 12 months after the introduction of the legislation.

In some parts of the industry, companies must demonstrate that there is no need for the legislation by ensuring that parents no longer complain about the treatment of their children. While the sample of parents contacted was small, there was ample evidence from some parents that there were grievances which could be substantiated, and also support from other parents who had considerable experience with children working in the industry that not all was well. It is unfortunate that complaints in parts of the industry may force added regulation on the whole industry.

Concern must be extended to producers and others who are working on slim budgets and tight timelines to turn out a
and difficult to comply with would be undesirable. There is no point in regulating the industry to death. Regulations that are easy to follow and forms that are simple to use are essential. It should be made clear to the industry who will be expected to be responsible for filling out, and signing, forms if they are introduced. The disparate nature of the industry indicates that responsibility could easily be passed on to less appropriate individuals or companies. The regulations need to be clear and unambiguous, and the same applies to the penalties.